

The Travelling Peasant and Urban-Rural Relations in Roman Galilee

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of urban-rural relations in the Roman Empire has received much attention in both the primary and the secondary literature. In spite of this attention, there seems to be little consensus on the nature of that interaction. In the primary literature, members of the urban population provide conflicting portraits of the rural population, at times portraying them in a positive light (e.g. Virgil *Georg.* 2.467, 473), but at other times in a negative light (e.g. Juvenal *Sat.* 3.67; cf. Braund 1989: 23-47; MacMullen 1974:28-31; Wallace-Hadrill 1991:241-72). In the secondary literature, the nature of urban-rural relations is described in a variety of ways, ranging from animosity to amicability. It is curious, then, that within this body of literature, little attention has been given to the means by which urban and rural populations interacted and the frequency of that interaction.

Because evidence concerning urban-rural interaction in the Roman Empire has been less than equally distributed both geographically and chronologically, it is best to consider a single time and place and to employ not only literary evidence but also archaeological evidence. Though evidence will be drawn from various areas of the Empire, this paper will focus on Roman Galilee.

Urban-rural relations in Roman Galilee have been studied and a number of positions on the existence and nature of these relations can be found in the relevant secondary literature. These will be surveyed in a review of literature. A discussion of peasant travel to and

participation at urban markets in the Roman Empire, in general, and in the Galilee, in particular, will follow in order to examine the means by which urban-rural interaction occurred and the frequency of that interaction. Finally, the reasons for the continued involvement of peasants at urban markets will be considered. It will be seen that peasant mobility and their economically-motivated journeys point to the commercial nature of the urban-rural relationship in the Roman Empire.

URBAN-RURAL INTERACTION?

That urban-rural interaction occurred in Roman Galilee must first be established. Three positions are present in secondary literature concerning the existence and the nature of Galilean urban-rural interaction.¹

The first position finds that the urban-rural relationship was nonexistent in Roman Galilee. In spite of their geographical proximity, Sanders states that the urban and rural populations never interacted for “[i]n real life, the peasants worked from dawn to dusk six days a week and rested on the Sabbath [and] for holidays they went to Jerusalem” (Sanders 2002:38). The underlying issue here, however, is the extent to which various areas of Roman Galilee were hellenized, for Sanders presupposes that the urban centres were hellenized and that the surrounding countryside was not. Thus, the peasantry would not have ventured into hellenized

¹ On urban-rural relations with respect to the Jesus movement, see Edwards 1992. On urban-rural relations in Luke-Acts, see Grimshaw 1999, Oakman 1991, and Rohrbaugh 1991. On urban-rural relations in second-century C.E. Galilee, see Goodman 1983:88-89. On urban-rural relations and Christianity in the first through third centuries C.E., see Frend 1979.

urban centres even if their workload, Sabbath observance, and cultic relationship with Jerusalem had not precluded urban-rural interaction for “[p]aganism up close would have scared them or offended them” (2002:38). It will be seen, however, that archaeological evidence renders this position untenable.

The second position finds that urban-rural interaction did occur in the Galilee and that the relationship was one of animosity. For Applebaum, urban-rural animosity was a function of class antagonism, for the elite landowners lived in urban centres while the rural peasants lived in the countryside (Applebaum 1977:371-72). He cites *y. Hor.* III, 48c as evidence of urban-rural antagonism in the Galilee in the last decades of the second-century C.E. and describes the basic antagonism as “originat[ing] in what the landlord took from his tenant or his debtor, and in the power which he accumulated thereby” (Applebaum 1977:372-73).²

Reed takes a similar position. He states that urban-rural contact was not uncommon and suggests several means through which rural Galileans acquired firsthand or second-hand knowledge of Sepphoris and Tiberias, “whether as agricultural suppliers or, less likely, through commercial contacts; perhaps to visit family and clan members who had moved there; or to visit the market, solicit services, or be hauled before court” (Reed 2000:99). The urban-rural relationship was one of animosity because of the strain that these cities had created in rural areas

² *y. Hor.* III, 48c (translation from Applebaum 1977:371, n. 78): There were two families in Tzippori (Sepphoris): The Councillors (*bouleutai*) and the villagers (*pagani*), and every day they came to greet the Patriarch. The Councillors entered first and left first. The villagers came early and asked to be admitted first. R. Simon ben Lakish was consulted, and he consulted R. Yohanan, who expounded in the seminary of R. Baniyah (saying): If a man is a bastard but learned, and a man of high priestly descent is an ignoramus, the learned bastard takes precedence over the ignorant high priest.

with respect to land-holding patterns and kinship (Reed 2000:98). Reed cautions, however, against assuming that the peasants singled out the urban centres as the source of their woes (Reed 2000:98).

Freyne also finds the urban-rural relationship to be one of antagonism. His argument is based on the distinction made by Redfield and Singer between the orthogenetic role of the city, that is, “the carrying forward into systematic and reflective dimensions of an old culture,” and the heterogenetic role of the city, that is, “the creating of original modes of thought that have authority beyond or in conflict with old cultures and civilizations” (Redfield and Singer 1954; Freyne 1992:76.) Using the writings of Josephus and the Gospels as his sources, he argues that the urban-rural relationship of mistrust and hostility originated from the orthogenetic orientation of the rural population and the heterogenetic orientation of the urban population.

In a separate article, Freyne identifies debt as another factor contributing to urban-rural animosity. This peasant debt had resulted from the “drawing off the resources of the countryside [by the elite], but without any productive reinvestment” (Freyne 1995:606).³ He finds in *Life* 375-76⁴ evidence of “a peasantry frustrated with centres which were not prepared to offer the kind of solidarity between town and country that might have been expected but which was not in

³ On the social dynamics of debt in Roman Palestine, see Oakman 1985:57-73 and Corbier 1991:211-39.

⁴ Josephus *Life* 375-76: The Galilaeans, seizing this opportunity, too good to be missed, of venting their hatred on one of the cities [Sepphoris] which they detested, rushed forward, with the intention of exterminating the population, aliens and all. Plunging into the town they set fire to the houses, which they found deserted, the terrified inhabitants having fled in a body to the citadel. They looted everything, sparing their countrymen no conceivable form of devastation.

fact forthcoming” (Freyne 1995:606). Thus, for Freyne, urban-rural animosity was a function of the conflicting value systems of the rural and urban areas and peasant debt.

The third position also finds that urban-rural interaction occurred in the Galilee but that the relationship was cooperative in nature. Arguments for this position rest primarily on archaeological evidence that confirms that intraregional trade of manufactured goods occurred in Roman Galilee. Using neutron activation analysis, Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman studied the chemical content of the clays of common kitchen-ware and storage-jars recovered in Galilean excavations and found that the artifacts were originally manufactured in the villages of Kefar Hananya and Shihin, respectively (Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman 1990:170; on neutron activation analysis, see Perlman and Asaro 1969). The difficulties of land transport accounts for the inverse relationship between the relative quantity of Kefar Hananya ware recovered at Galilean sites and the distance from Kefar Hananya (Adan-Bayewitz 1993:219).

Based on the absence of literary references to the manufacturing of pottery either in Sepphoris or Tiberias and on the fact that the pottery of Kefar Hananya and Shihin accounted for the bulk of the household pottery used in Roman Sepphoris, they conclude that the Galilean cities of Sepphoris and, presumably, Tiberias, had been dependent upon these rural settlements to supply their manufactured products (Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman 1990:170; Adan-Bayewitz 1993:211-19). Conversely, the discovery of Kefar Hananya ware in the settlements around Sepphoris is seen to be an indication of Kefar Hananya’s dependence on Sepphoris as a distribution centre of their pottery (Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman 1990:170-71; Adan-Bayewitz 1993:211-19; cf. Edwards 1988:173). Thus, Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman conclude that a

cooperative relationship existed between Kefar Hananya and Sepphoris because of their interdependence. Oakman correctly discerns, however, the need for an explicit systems model in this study (1994:232). Based solely on the distribution of the pottery, a range of scenarios are possible, ranging from members of the elite in Sepphoris owning and controlling pottery shops in the villages, to controlling the trade, to a more equitable relationship.

In short, three positions are present in secondary literature concerning the occurrence and nature of urban-rural interaction in Roman Galilee. The first position finds the urban-rural relationship to be nonexistent in Roman Galilee; the second position finds it to be one of animosity; and the third finds it to be one of amicability. The discussions advocating these positions, however, provide little to no comment on the frequency or means by which urban and rural populations might have interacted. Thus, to evaluate the nature of urban-rural relations, it is necessary to consider venues in the Roman Empire and the Galilee in which urban-rural interaction occurred on an ongoing basis.

MARKET-DAYS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Studies of Galilean intraregional trade have focused primarily on manufactured goods; however, such goods were purchased only sporadically and, therefore, cannot be determinative when considering the extent to which urban-rural interaction occurred. In contrast, trade involving agricultural goods allows one to gain insight into the extent of urban-rural interaction because such goods were perishable and, thus, would have been bought and sold on an ongoing basis. The setting for this interaction was the urban market to which peasants frequently

travelled. The market was a feature of cities not only in the Galilee but also throughout the Roman Empire.

Market-days, referred to as *agora* in Greek and as *nundinae* in Latin, were held a number of times each month (Frayn 1993:3-4; Ligt 1993:39-41, 51-54; MacMullen 1970:339). The commodity sold most often on market-days was the agricultural produce of the surrounding area (Ligt and De Neeve 1998:402; Goodman 1983:54). These high-frequency market-days were distinct both from the low-frequency fairs (usually referred to as *panêgyris* in Greek, as *mercatus* in Latin, or as *yerid* in Hebrew) and the city's daily market (usually referred to as *macellum* or *forum* in Latin) (Frayn 1993:3-4; Ligt 1993:35-39, 48-50, 71).

Fairs had cycles ranging from once every six months to four years and were often held in conjunction with religious festivals or elections (Ligt 1993:35-37; MacMullen 1970:336-37). Those attending a fair would travel considerable distances and remain for several days or for several weeks, depending upon the size of the fair (Ligt 1993:14-15). The economic functions of fairs and markets differed with respect to the types of goods available. Low-order goods, that is, goods which were required frequently for which buyers would be unwilling to travel very far to purchase, were available at both markets and fairs. In contrast, high-order goods, that is, costly goods which were purchased infrequently, were available only at fairs (and perhaps centres which served large populations).

Daily markets were not found in every town or city but only those centres "where there were enough upper-class residents to patronize [them]" (Frayn 1993:159). Those who lived either in or immediately outside of a particular city (*suburbani*) would frequent the daily market.

For example, the characters in Plautus purchased meat and vegetables whenever a festive occasion arose (*Pseud.* 169). In contrast, those who lived in more distant villages (*rusticani*) would travel to the urban market only on market-days (Fraysn 1993:17-20; Shaw 1995:44). For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus stated, “In time of peace he accustomed [free men] to remain at their tasks in the country, except when it was necessary for them to come to market, upon which occasions they were to meet in the city in order to traffic, and to that end he appointed every ninth day for the markets” (*Ant. rom.* 2.28.3). Macrobius also indicated that market-days were intended for the rural population (*Sat.* 1.16.32-34).⁵ Those who worked in villas also attended market-days; however, they were discouraged from making unnecessary trips to town (Cato *Agr.* 5.2, 5.4; Columella *De Re Rustica* 1.8.6, 11.1.23; Pliny *Nat.* 18.3.13-14; Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.16.5).⁶ Fraysn suggests that the goods available at the daily markets were

⁵ Macrobius *Sat.* 1.16.32-34: The first establishment of the market day is attributed to Romulus, who, it is said, after sharing his royal power with Titus Tatius and after instituting certain sacrifices and associations, also prescribed the observance of those days. And this is what Tuditanus maintains; but Cassius [Hemina] says that they were a device of Servius Tullius, designed to enable country folk to meet in Rome and arrange matters that concerned both town and country. Geminus says that it was after the expulsion of the kings that a market day was first held, because most of the common people in memory of the late Servius Tullius used to offer sacrifice in his honor on those days; and Varro too agrees with this account. However, according to Rutilius, the Romans instituted market days in order that the country people, after working for eight [*recte* seven] days in the fields, should leave their work there on the ninth [*recte* eighth] day and come to Rome to sell their wares and to get information about the laws; and also that there might be a larger concourse of the people to hear the popular and senatorial decrees which might be brought before them, for matters published for a period of three market days would readily come to the knowledge of one and all.

⁶ Cato *Agr.* 5.2-5: The overseer must not be a gadabout [concern that overseer must not be a gadabout]

Columella *De Re Rustica* 1.8.6: He [the overseer] must have no acquaintance with the

purchased on market-days, that is, “the greengrocer may have obtained his supplies from the regular weekly market, and in some cases not replenished them until market-day came round again” (Frayn 1993:160-61).

The original meaning of *nundinae* indicates that the market was held every eighth day (literally, the ninth day; e.g. Cassius Dio 40.47.1, 48.33.4; Macrobius 1.16.34). A nine-day cycle was followed in Rome and in the Campanian towns of Pompeii, Nuceria, Atella, Nola, Cumae, Puteoli, and Capua (Shaw 1995:44). The cycle of market-days could vary, however, from place to place. A monthly market was held in Aleisium and in Tetrapyrgia (Strabo *Geogr.* 8.3.10 and IGRR IV 1381 = SEG XIII 518, respectively). Aristophanes’ mention of sales made on the first day of the month (*noumçnia*) implies a monthly market as well (*Eq.* 43-44; *Vesp.* 169-171). It was not always a simple task to determine when the next market-day would take place due to the differing cycle and calendar of each city. Thus, evidence of attempts to determine the market-

city or with the weekly market, except to make purchases and sales in connection with his duties. For, as Cato says, an overseer should not be a gadabout.

Columella *De Re Rustica* 11.1.23: He should not frequent the town or any fairs [*nundinas*] except for the sale or purchase of something necessary.

Pliny *Nat.* 18.3.13-14: They used to resort to the city on market-days, and consequently elections were not allowed to be held on market-days, so that the common people of the country might not be called away from their homes.

Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.16.4-6: [F]or if towns or villages are too far away from the estate, they supply themselves with smiths and other necessary artisans to keep on the place, so that their farm hands may not leave their work and lounge around holiday-making on working days, rather than make the farm more profitable by attending to their duties. It is for this reason, therefore, that Saserna’s book lays down the rule that no person shall leave the farm except the overseer, the butler, and one person whom the overseer may designate; if one leaves against this rule he shall not go unpunished, and if he does, the overseer shall be punished. The rule should rather be stated thus: that no one shall leave the farm without the direction of the overseer, nor the overseer without the direction of the master, on an errand which will prevent his return the same day, and that no oftener than is necessary for the farm business.

days of the upcoming month has been found in various places. In Pompeii, for example, a storekeeper used the walls of his store as scratch paper to calculate what days the markets would on (CIL 4.8863). In Suessula, a marble plaque was inscribed with a list of Campanian market-days and three similar lists were found in Allifae (CIL 6.32505; cf. MacMullen 1970:339-40).

Competition might arise between the markets of neighbouring cities, thus, their market-days were arranged in a manner such that they did not conflict with one another; this arrangement not only curbed competition but also allowed itinerant merchants to sell their wares at each market of neighbouring cities (MacMullen 1970:334, 339-40). The coordination of market-days can be observed in northern Africa, where the market-days in Castellum Tidditanorum were held on the day before the calends and the day before the ides of each month (ILAlg II 3604; cf. Shaw 1995:66, n.3) and those of Castellum Mastarense, twelve kilometres south, were held on the third day before the calends and the third day before the ides (ILS 6868; cf. Shaw 1995:67, n.1). This coordination can also be observed in Magnesian territory, where market-days were held in Attukleis on the eighth, eighteenth, and twenty-ninth days of each month, in Mandragoreis on the ninth, nineteenth, and thirtieth days of each month, and in Magnesia on the tenth, twentieth, and thirty-first (or first) days of each month, though these are described as *panêgyris* rather than as *nundinae* (Ligt 1991:52; Ligt 1993:125-26).

Market-days were also a feature of cities in the Galilee. Market-days as well as municipal market control had been urban features from Hellenistic times (Applebaum 1976:687). The Jewish market-day had been Friday but was changed to Monday and Thursday during the Second Temple and mishnaic periods (Applebaum 1976:687; Safrai 1994:76). As

rural residents would be present in the city for the market-day, Torah readings, prayers, and courts were arranged to occur concurrently (*m. Meg.* 1:1, 3:6; *m. Ketub.* 1:1; cf. Safrai 1994:239-40).⁷

Although market-days were scheduled, it is necessary to assess the feasibility of a twice-weekly trip by rural residents to the city. This assessment can be carried out using Central Place Theory. This theory conceives that

a region has a major urban centre surrounded by a hierarchy of lesser centres with a smaller population, but each ranking of settlement is seen as consisting of places of a similar size and importance. A major city thus contains within its region a number of smaller cities and each of these serves a region with towns, each of which in turn is surrounded by a region of villages. The key factors which determine this pattern of settlement location are commerce, especially local marketing functions, and administrative functions, through which the cities serve the towns and the town the villages and even the villages may – in Europe at any rate – serve a small area of farms and hamlets (Hopkins 1980:19).

Hopkins uses this theory in studying the distance of cities from the port city of Joppa. He finds “a clear sequence of urban settlements spaced at ten to twelve mile intervals [fifteen to nineteen kilometres] from Joppa and each ring of cities is a similar distance from the next” (Hopkins 1980:22). As a peasant could walk twenty to thirty kilometres in a single day, the distance

⁷ *m. Meg.* 1:1: Villages and large towns read it [the Scroll of Esther] on the 14th, save that villages [sometimes] read it earlier on a day of assembly [A Monday or Thursday. Then the courts of law were in session (cf. *Ket.* 1:1) when some learned person could be counted upon to be present to read the Scroll.].

m. Meg. 3:6: On Mondays and Thursdays and on Sabbaths at the Afternoon Prayer they read according to the set order.

m. Ketub. 1:1: A virgin should be married on a Wednesday and a widow on a Thursday, for in towns the court sits twice in the week, on Mondays and on Thursdays; so that if the husband would lodge a virginity suit he may forthwith go in the morning to the court.

between urban centres was not haphazard, but reflects “the ability of the pre-industrial peasant to walk with his donkey from village to town and back in one day” (Hopkins 1980:24; cf. Ligt 1991:46 and Shaw 1995:40). In central Italy, the distance between cities was eleven to thirteen kilometres; thus, nearly all peasants were within walking distance of an urban centre (Ligt 1991:54-55; cf. Frayn 1993:79-100). By applying a fifteen-mile distance to market, Edwards finds that “nearly every village in Lower Galilee would fall within range of the two major cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias” (Edwards 1988:175). Thus, in Lower Galilee, the distance from village to city could have been traversed in a day by peasants walking to attend the twice-weekly urban markets.

Peasants, primarily small farmers, would attend in order to sell their produce. Plato discussed the farmer who took his produce to the market-place and waited to “exchange money for goods with those who wish to sell, and goods for money with as many as desire to buy” (Plato *Republic* 371C). Columella described peasants who raised flowers for the purpose of selling them, thus:

And you, ye rustics, who with callous thumb cull the soft flowers, with dark-red corn-flag blooms pile high your baskets of hoar willow-twigs, let roses strain the threads of twisted rush and let the throngs of flaming marigolds their panniers burst, that rich in vernal wares Vertumnus may abound and that from town the carrier may return well soaked with wine, with staggering gait, and pockets full of cash (*De Re Rustica* 10.304-10).

Libanius spoke of peasants selling cheese, wheat, barley, and fodder (Libanius *Or.* 50.25, 28, 31). In the Theodosian Code, peasants were exempt from the lustral tax if they sold only the

produce from their farms (*Cod. theod.* 13.1.3, 10, 12).⁸ The Mishnah also refers to peasants selling their produce. Men primarily sold goods (*m. Demai* 5:7; *m. Pesah.* 9:11)⁹; however, women might sell their bread (*m. Hal.* 2:7)¹⁰ or olives (*t. B. Qam.* 11:7) and children or slaves might also conduct sales (*t. B. Qam.* 11:7).¹¹

⁸ 13.1.3: Of course, if your rustics and coloni do not engage at all in the business of commerce, they must not be assessed for taxes as tradesmen. Indeed, it must not be reckoned as business and merchandising if your men and also the rustics dwelling on your landholdings should sell those products yielded by the lands which they are cultivating and on the same farm.

13.1.10: Neither the coloni of the estates of Our privy purse nor any other rustics shall be disquieted on account of the produce which grows customarily in their fields. We decree that also those persons who seek and maintain their livelihood by manual labor, such as potters and carpenters, shall be free from the burden of such tax payment. In this way only those of the rustic common people who on account of the merchandise and assets of business are among the tradesmen shall assume the lot of a tradesman, since they are not held to the cultivation of their fields by a zeal previously engendered in them, but are involved by their acquired mode of life and by their preference in the buying and selling of goods.

13.1.12: No tradesman shall be exempt from the payment of public taxes except those only who by harmless industry merely sell the domestic products grown on their own landholdings. The office staffs and tax collectors must be held responsible for those tradesmen whom they are proved to have exempted and removed, to double the amount of that sum which those tradesmen should have paid.

⁹ *m. Demai* 5:7: If a man bought from a householder and bought from him again a second time, he may give Tithe from the one purchase for the other, even though they are from two hampers or from two towns. *If a householder sold vegetables in the market* and they were brought to him from his own gardens, [he that buys] may give Tithe from one kind for all; but if from other gardens, he must give Tithe from each kind. (italics mine)

m. Pesah. 9:11: If the Passover-offerings of two persons were confused, they each draw one of them and each appoints a partner from the street and each comes to the other. (Goodman 1983:211, n. 27 states, “Finding suitable witnesses for documents is described usually as ‘getting one from the קרוש’, which assumes that most people there are adult male Jews, eligible as witnesses.”)

¹⁰ *m. Hal.* 2:7: if a woman prepared [dough] to sell in the market

¹¹ *t. B. Qam.* 11:7: Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, “They purchase olives from women.

As it was the intention of the rural population to sell their produce on market-days, it is necessary to assess the feasibility of transporting that produce to the market. Two objections have been raised against the feasibility of transporting goods from rural farms to urban markets. The first objection concerns the difficulties of land transport and the second concerns the cost of transportation.

It has been argued that transporting goods over land was severely limited in the Roman Empire.¹² Much emphasis has been placed on the relative ease of water transport. In some places, however, even with access to waterways, land transport was preferred. For instance, while discussing the advantages of travel and transport provided by proximity to the Rhodanus river, Strabo acknowledged,

But since the Rhodanus is swift and difficult to sail up, some of the traffic from here *preferably goes by land* on the wagons, that is, all the traffic that is conveyed to the Arvernians and the Liger River—albeit in a part of its course the Rhodanus draws close to these also; still, the fact that the road is level and not long (about eight hundred stadia) is an inducement not to use the voyage upstream, since it is easier to go by land (*Geogr.* 4.1.14, italics mine).

Further, the importance of proximity to roads for the purpose, among other things, of transporting goods from a farm or villa to urban markets was noted by several Roman

. . . A son who is selling out in the market, and so too, a slave who is selling out in the market—it is permitted to purchase from them.

¹² Finley's objection has become standard: "The ox was the chief traction animal of antiquity, the mule and donkey his near rivals, the horse hardly at all. All three are slow and hungry. The transport figures in Diocletian's edict of maximum prices imply that a 1200-pound wagon-load of wheat would double in price in 300 miles, that a shipment of grain by sea from one end of the Mediterranean to the other would cost less (ignoring the risks) than carting it seventy-five miles (Finley 1985[1973]:126).

agricultural writers. For instance, Cato advised purchasing a piece of land near “a flourishing town, or the sea, or a navigable stream, and a good and much travelled road” (*De Re Rustica* 1.4-5). Columella stated,

A handy road contributes much to the worth of land: . . . it is convenience for bringing in and carrying out the necessaries—a factor which increases the value of stored crops and lessens the expense of bringing things in, as they are transported at lower cost to a place which may be reached without great effort (*De Re Rustica* 1.3.3-4).

When advising his wife on farm management, Marcus Terentius Varro stated,

A farm is rendered more profitable by convenience of transportation: if there are roads on which carts can easily be driven, or navigable rivers near by. We know that transportation to and from many farms is carried on by *both these methods*. (*De Re Rustica* 1.16.6; italics mine)

In the absence of well-built roads, mule-tracks connected outlying farms to urban centres (Frayn 1979:149). The use of roads, then, seemed to have eased some of the difficulties of land transport. Based on the roads known to have existed in second-century C.E. Galilee, Strange asserts that a sufficiently developed network of roads existed in first-century C.E. Galilee for “we can deduce by archaeological methods that a pre-second century extensive trade network existed that connected the villages, towns and cities of Lower Galilee, Upper Galilee, the rift, and the Golan” (Strange 1994:82; cf. Safrai 1994:286-87).¹³

The difficulties of land transport may have been further eased by the variety of means of transporting goods. Goods could be carried (Martial *Epigrams* 3.47, 7.31)¹⁴ or loaded on to

¹³ For a discussion of the main and local road systems in Judea, see Safrai 1994:274-77.

¹⁴ Martial *Epigrams* 3.47: [H]e carried eggs safe in their hay.
Martial *Epigrams* 7.31: Whatever your Umbrian bailiff or tenant sends you, . . . is

animals such as donkeys (Libanius *Or.* 50.23; Virgil *Georg.* 1.273-5).¹⁵ In Syria, donkeys were made available to peasants to transport goods to Antioch (Libanius *Or.* 27.15, 35.11, 50.31).

The Mishnah refers to the transportation of manufactured and agricultural goods either by donkey, by camel, or in baskets on one's shoulders (*m. B. Bat.* 2:14; *m. Ma'as.* 1:5; cf.

Applebaum 1976:686 and Safrai 1994:234-37).¹⁶ This evidence emerges from the late second-century C.E.; however, it can be applied to first-century C.E. Galilee as the political changes following the First and Bar Kokhba revolts were unlikely to have had an effect on the means of transporting goods over land. In places where good roads existed, mules or donkeys could be used to draw wagons (Varro *De Re Rustica* 2.8.5; Strabo *Geogr.* 4.6.10).¹⁷ Wagons were not usually employed in land transport in Judea, however, as transport by donkey was cheaper and faster (Safrai 1994:289).

produced for me.

¹⁵ Virgil *Georg.* 1.273-5: Oft, too, the driver loads his slow donkey's sides with oil or cheap fruits, and as he comes back from town brings with him an indented millstone or a mass of black pitch.

¹⁶ *m. B. Bat.* 2:14: If a tree stretches into the public domain enough must be cut away to allow a camel and its rider to pass by. R. Judah says: A camel laden with flax or bundles of branches. R. Simeon says: Every such tree must be cut away according to the plumbline's measure, because of uncleanness.

m. Ma'as. 1:5: Produce that is packed up in a basket is liable to Tithes after it has been covered, or, if it is not to be covered, after a vessel is filled with it, or, if a vessel is not to be filled with it, after it has been collected in the manner needful. This applies when a man brings the produce to market; but if he brings it to his own house he may make a chance meal from the produce [without tithing it] until he reaches his house.

¹⁷ Strabo *Geogr.* 4.6.10: . . . through which the merchandise from Aquileia is conveyed in wagons to what is called Nauportus (over a road of not much more than four hundred stadia).

The second objection against the feasibility of transporting goods from rural farms to urban markets concerns the cost of land transport. In some parts of the Empire, peasants were required to deliver their produce to the urban centres and then returned home. Such is the case described by Apuleius: “In the morning my master would load me with piles of vegetables and lead me to the nearby town, and, when he had turned his produce over to the vendors there, return to his farm riding on my back” (*Metam.* 9.32). A similar situation is described by Callistratus, who stated,

If someone has ordered the actual workers of the land or fishermen to bring provisions to a city in order to sell them themselves, the food supply will be interrupted since the rustics (*rustici*) are called away from their work. [Therefore,] they ought, as soon as they have brought their wares in, to hand them over and return to their work” (*Dig.* L 11.2 cited by Ligt 1993:259-60).

Both texts seem to assume that peasants were able to undertake both the journey to the city and the cost of transporting their goods. With respect to urban-rural interaction, these texts would seem to indicate that little urban-rural interaction occurred. In Callistratus’ statement, however, slaves or tenants seem to be in view and his interest seems to have been the minimization of disruption in the normal operation of farms (Ligt 1993:260).

In other parts of the Empire, farmers were not required to transport their goods to urban markets, but had the option of selling their produce to itinerant merchants. Such middlemen, who also sold crafts and raw materials, would transport the produce to town and sell the produce themselves (Applebaum 1976:688; cf. Safrai 1994:228-29 for mishnaic references to the *tagar*). Choosing to sell produce to middlemen, however, eroded farmers’ profits for they were, in

effect, paying the middlemen to transport the produce to market. Instead, farmers chose to transport their produce to market and sell the produce themselves.

Peasant could transport their produce to urban markets and market those goods in part because of structural underemployment in agriculture in the Roman world. Small farmers did not hire day-labourers but possessed the human and animal labour required at peak agricultural times (Erdkamp 1999:558). Thus, during off-peak times, small farmers had an excess of human and animal labour available, which could be employed not only in land transport of goods from their own farm or from neighbouring farms or villas but also in the sale of those goods (Erdkamp 1999:566). (A number of references to peasants marketing their goods, both in the Galilee and throughout the Empire, have been discussed above.)

Alston, in his study of intraregional trade in Roman Egypt, suggested that excess animal labour might have been available because “a number of people invested in transport animals which were being herded within the village by professional herdsmen and . . . used by the owners themselves to transport goods” (Alston 1998:178). Though impossible to prove, a similar situation might have existed in first-century C.E. Galilee, for there were people employed as herdsmen. Regardless of the ownership of the animals, agricultural produce accounted for the largest quantity of goods involved in low transportation, that is, “the movement of goods over short distances” (Erdkamp 1999:566). Thus, it was feasible for rural residents to transport their goods to urban markets and to market those goods due, in part, to the underemployment inherent in Roman agriculture.

The higher price of goods sold in urban markets than that of goods sold at the farm was a further incentive for farmers to sell their produce in urban centres. In P.Cair.Zen. IV.59591, Dioskourides, a farmer employed by Zenon (P.Cair.Zen. 59215), asked Zenon “to send a man to Akanthopolis to purchase hay, for otherwise they will be obliged to buy in the market at a high price” (Edgar 1971:47). Dioskourides indicated that the retail price would be 6 chalkoi per sheaf; however, “[i]n *P. Teb.*, 122, the price is about 3 chalkoi on the silver standard, while in no. 59723 the Crown buys it from the peasants at about a tenth of that figure” (Edgar 1971:48). Thus, by transporting their goods to urban markets, the higher price for the goods allowed farmers to recover the cost of transportation over land and possibly make positive profits.

The price of goods could vary from city to city as well. This scenario is reflected in *m. Ma'as. Š. 4:1*, which states,

If a man took Second Tithe produce from a place where prices were high to a place where prices were low, or from a place where prices were low to a place where prices were high, he must redeem it at the price that prevails in the place where he is. If a man brought produce from the threshing-floor to the town, or jars of wine from the winepress to the town, the increase in value falls to the Second [Tithe] and the outlay [for removal] falls on his household.

In the Galilee, then, the rabbis apparently advocated that the urban market price should not include the cost of transporting the goods to the city.

In short, the twice-weekly market-days were a venue in Roman Galilee where urban-rural interaction occurred on an ongoing basis. Rural residents were able to travel to the urban markets regularly in order to sell their produce because of the proximity of villages to the urban centres. Further, neither the difficulties nor the costs of land transport prevented peasants from transporting their goods to urban markets, for roads and a variety of methods for transport

existed. The possibility of positive profits was a further incentive to participate in urban markets. Thus, an urban-rural relationship of a commercial nature existed in Roman Galilee.

RURAL INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN MARKETS

That the opportunity for ongoing urban-rural interaction existed has been seen. It is clear that urban residents benefited from this interaction in the stability of their food supply. Further, urban centres maintained control over the markets and were responsible for setting the prices of the goods (e.g. *m. B. Mesi'a* 5:7; Josephus *Ant.* 18.149; cf. Applebaum 1977:372 and 1976:663-64).¹⁸ Although urban centres generated economic activity that benefited rural residents (Hopkins 1978:75), outside of urban centres, rural residents were still able to exchange their surplus produce for items that their households could not or did not produce through bartering, that is, within the social institution of reciprocity. Thus, the reasons for the continued involvement of rural residents in urban markets remain to be determined. Two reasons for their continued involvement will be discussed.

The first reason for rural participation in urban markets is related to the context of increasing monetization and the need of peasants to acquire coinage for certain payments.

¹⁸ *m. B. Mesi'a* 5:7: No bargain may be made over produce before its market-price is known.

Josephus *Ant.* 18.149: So Herodias and her husband sent for him, assigned him Tiberias as a dwelling place, fixed him an allowance for living expenses and raised him to the position of commissioner of markets in Tiberias [i.e. his function was similar to that of the Roman aedile, his chief duties being to inspect the market, to regulate the prices and quantities of items brought into the market, and to punish those guilty of using false weights and measures].

Coinage might be used for the payment of certain rents and taxes.¹⁹ Alternatively, it might be spent on certain goods and services.

Although rural households aimed to be self-sufficient, certain goods could not be cultivated or manufactured on farms and had to be purchased. Literary evidence indicates that peasants purchased millstones, pitch, and iron tools such as sickles, scythes, and axes (Aristophanes *Pax* 1198-1206; Cato *De Re Rustica* 22.3, 135.1; Virgil *Georg.* 1.273-75). Other items such as salt, pots, and clothes were also purchased (Ligt 1990:47; Hopkins 1978:75). Goods purchased for the operation of a farm were exempt from tax (*Cod. theod.* 4.13.2-3). Services accessible in cities that peasants might have spent coinage on included “law, protection, peace, rituals, ceremonies and medical advice, even surgery” (Hopkins 1978:75).

In order to acquire currency, farmers might grow a surplus. In such cases, part of the produce cultivated on the farm was used to sustain the farmer and his family and the surplus would be sold at market (Safrai 1994:224). This scenario is indicated in *m. Ma'as.* 1:5, which states, “This applies when a man brings the produce to market; but if he brings it to his own house he may make a chance meal from the produce [without tithing it] until he reaches his house.”

Other farmers cultivated cash crops, which were intended primarily for urban markets.

Varro advised his wife on the cultivation of cash crops in the following manner:

And so it is profitable near a city to have gardens on a large scale; for instance, of violets and roses and many other products for which there is a demand in the city; while it would

¹⁹ On the relationship between monetization and tax collection, see Crawford 1970:40-48.

not be profitable to raise the same products on a distant farm where there is no market to which its products can be carried. (Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.16.3)

Galilean farmers within range of urban markets could raise cash crops such as rice, industrial crops, vegetables, and herbs (*m. Kil.* 1:2-3, 5; *m. Demai* 2:1; cf. Applebaum 1976:653.).²⁰ Cash crops such as rice, which is first mentioned in Talmudic literature in the Javneh period (90-132 C.E.), and vegetables required irrigation (Safrai 1994:117, 144-45, 369). In many settlements, cisterns that held the water necessary for irrigating vegetables gardens were found at a distance of ten to one hundred meters from those settlements for “[t]his was the most likely area in which the vegetable gardens were cultivated” (Safrai 1994:369). Wilson argues that urban aqueducts were used to the advantage of rural farmers near Amiternum, Carthage, and Caesarea Maritima (Wilson 1999). As both Sepphoris and Tiberias had aqueducts, it is not inconceivable that farmers near those cities used the aqueducts to irrigate their rice and vegetables as well.

Some scholars distinguish between subsistence farmers and market-oriented farmers.

The subsistence farmer did not raise cash crops but only stable and secure crops that would meet

²⁰ *m. Kil.* 1:2-3: The cucumber and the musk-melon are not accounted Diverse Kinds. R. Judah says: They are accounted Diverse Kinds. Lettuce and willow-lettuce, chicory and wild chicory, the leek and the wild leek, coriander and wild coriander, mustard and Egyptian mustard, the Egyptian gourd and the bitter gourd, the Egyptian bean and the carob are not accounted Diverse Kinds. The turnip and the radish, the cabbage and the cauliflower, beet and orach are not accounted Diverse Kinds. R. Akiba added: Garlic and wild garlic, onions and wild onions, lupine and wild lupine are not accounted Diverse Kinds.

m. Kil. 1:5: Although the long radish and the round radish, mustard and wild mustard, the Greek gourd and the Egyptian or bitter gourd are like to each other, they accounted Diverse Kinds.

m. Demai 2:1: Tithe must everywhere be given from these things as being *demai*-produce: fig-cake, dates, carobs, rice, and cummin.

the requirements of the household (Erdkamp 1999:563; Finley 1985[1973]:107). The market-oriented farmer cultivated cash crops, undertaking higher risks in hopes of greater profits (Foxhall 1990:105). One must guard against a too strict division between the subsistence and market-oriented farmers, however, for a household could fulfill its needs either directly or indirectly, that is, by producing something that was exchanged to meet the needs of that household (Erdkamp 1999:563). The indirect fulfillment of household needs occurred as early as the fifth-century B.C.E. in Athens for Plutarch told of Pericles whose practice was “to sell his annual products all together in the lump, and then to buy in the market each article as it was needed, and so provide the ways and means of daily life” (Plutarch *Per.* 16.4). Crawford discusses this text in conjunction with the increasing monetization of the Roman Empire and concludes that if such a way of life was possible in the fifth-century B.C.E., then “a similar existence was probably possible in the far richer and more sophisticated cities of the Roman Empire” (Crawford 1970:42).

Erdkamp suggests that one distinction between subsistence farmers and market-oriented farmers is that the goal of the latter “[was] not the optimization of the output of capital or land” (Erdkamp 1999:563). He provides the example of flax cultivation. Although flax required more labour input than corn, the flax cultivated could be exchanged for “a larger volume of corn than it would have been possible to produce on the same piece of land” (Erdkamp 1999:563). This is relevant in the Galilee, where, despite the demands of soil fertility, flax was cultivated and used

in the textile industry (*m. B. Qam.* 10:9; cf. Applebaum 1976:654).²¹ Based on the Edict of Diocletian, the profit per dunam of flax was 1.2 to 1.8 times the profit on a dunam of wheat (Safrai 1994:159-60). Ligt argues, however, that the production of cash crops may not have resulted in the desired profit because “the positive effect of higher prices was outweighed by the negative effect of the smaller size of the marketable surplus” (Ligt 1993:137).

The second reason for rural participation in urban markets is related to the relative variety of crops cultivated in a particular geographical area and the need for redistribution. A variety of crops could be cultivated in the Galilean climate; however, certain crops thrived in particular regions, thus, villages in those areas devoted themselves to a single or limited number of products. The different specializations present within a cluster of villages resulted in what Wolf calls “sectional markets” (Wolf 1966:40). Arbela, Kefar Hittaya, Hukkok, and Chorazin were known as wheat production centres (*y. Pe’ah* 20a; *y. Pesah.* 27c; *b. Menah.* 85a). Sepphoris, Tiberias, Kefar Sogane, Sallamin, Acchabaron, Beth Shearim, and Gennesaret were involved in the wine industry (*J.W.* 3.3, 3.10.8; *m. Menah.* 8:6; *y. Meg.* 72d; *m. Kil.* 4:4; *b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 30a). Strange suggests that “[i]f we investigate with care, we may find centers for other agricultural products such as olives, barley, wine, and flax” (Strange 1994:83). Participation in urban market-days provided an opportunity for rural residents involved in

²¹ *m. B. Qam.* 10:9: None may buy wool or milk from herdsmen, or wood or fruit from them that watch over fruit-trees; but from women they may buy garments of wool in Judea and garments of flax in Galilee or calves in Sharon.

sectional markets to gain access to a variety of agricultural goods beyond that which was raised in their own villages.

In short, rural residents continued to interact with urban residents on market-days for two reasons. First, they could acquire coinage for the payment of rent or taxes or for the purchase of various items. This coinage could be gained through the cultivation and sale either of surplus produce or of cash crops. Second, at the urban market, peasants could gain access to a variety of goods beyond that which was raised in their own villages.

The attendance and participation of rural residents at urban markets may have implications for the ongoing debate surrounding the nature of the Roman economy. There have traditionally been two schools of thought. Much of the debate has been concerned with “the degree to which ancient economies were qualitatively and/or quantitatively similar to or different from later medieval, early modern, and modern economic arrangements” (Harland 2002:516). The “modernizing” model of Rostovtzeff (1928-1930, 1957) stresses the similarities between the ancient and modern economies, finding that “[t]he modern development . . . differs from the ancient only in quantity and not in quality” (Reinhold 1946:362-63). Thus, Rostovtzeff freely applies modern capitalistic categories and terminology to the ancient situation, using terms such as “capitalism,” “bourgeoisie,” “proletariat,” and “mass production” (Reinhold 1946:363; D’Arms 1981:12).

In contrast, the “primitivist” model of Finley emphasizes the differences between the ancient economies and subsequent economies, both in quantity and quality, to the extent that modern terms are of no help in attempts to understand the ancient situation. According to this

model, the “consumer city” acted as a parasite, drawing on the resources of the *chora* through rents and taxes (Finley 1985[1973]:125). Engels describes it, thus:

Classical peasants lived at the margin of market values and institutions. Classical peasants lived at the margin of human existence and had little or nothing left over after they paid their taxes, rents, and maintenance. Therefore, classical cities could not have been supported by the voluntary exchange of peasant surplus for urban goods and services, since the peasant had little or no surplus at his disposal and no knowledge of a market (1990:1).

An alternative model has been suggested by Engels who, in his study of Roman Corinth, has proposed the “service city” as an alternative model of the classical city. Engels argues that ancient peasants raised almost twice as much produce than is usually supposed and that the city “was indeed supported by the voluntary exchange of peasant surpluses for urban goods and services” (1990:1-2). Engels may have overstated the surplus at the disposal of ancient peasants; however, it has become clear that in the absence of a surplus, cash crops might have been raised. Further, that rural residents did derive some benefits from their participation in urban markets may indicate that the parasitic portrayal of the city has been slightly exaggerated.

CONCLUSION

Three positions were found to be present in the secondary literature concerning the existence and the nature of urban-rural interaction in Roman Galilee. The first position found that urban-rural interaction did not occur. The second position found that urban-rural interaction occurred and that the nature of that interaction was one of animosity. The third position was supported by archaeological evidence and found that urban-rural interaction occurred but that the nature of that interaction was one of amicability. The common weakness of each discussion was

the absence of comment on the frequency or venue in which ongoing urban-rural interaction might have occurred.

The twice-weekly market-days of Roman Galilee were established as one setting in which urban and rural populations interacted regularly. Ancient peasants had considerable mobility, thus, it was both feasible and profitable for peasants to make frequent trips to the urban markets in light of the proximity of villages to urban centres, the not-insurmountable difficulties or costs of land transport, and the higher urban market prices. Although rural residents had the option of trading outside of urban centres, they continued to participate in urban market-days because of their need to acquire coinage for the payment of taxes or rent and for the purchase of various goods and services. Further, their attendance at urban markets provided access to a variety of goods beyond that available in their own villages.

Ancient peasants clearly had a greater degree of mobility and travelled more frequently than has formerly been supposed. Through their local and economically-motivated travel, it has been demonstrated that urban-rural interaction of a primarily commercial nature existed in Roman Galilee.

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